SANATANA DHARMA AND SUPERSTITIONS – AN ANALYSIS

“Dharma” comes from the Sanskrit root √dhṛ, which means “to uphold, sustain, or support.” So, the word dharma is derived by adding the suffix “-ma” to that root, giving it the sense of “that which upholds or supports” (order, righteousness, duty, law, etc.). In Sanskrit, it’s □□ (dhṛ) → □□□□ (dharma).

- From Sanskrit root √dhṛ “to uphold, sustain, support.”

- Thus, dharma (□□□□) literally conveys “that which upholds or supports” the cosmic order, righteousness, duty, law, and virtue.

Conceptual meaning - Dharma is a multifaceted concept embodying moral law, duty, righteousness, and the right way of living. It’s not just “religion” in the sense of faith; it’s more about the moral order that sustains individuals and society. Think of it as the “right conduct” that aligns personal actions with cosmic harmony.

In Hinduism, dharma covers:

- Cosmic order / natural law: The way things are meant to function harmoniously.

- Individual duty (Svādharma): Personal responsibilities guided by one’s nature, role, caste, life stage (āśrama), etc.

- Social / ethical conduct: Behaviors that support societal well-being and cohesion.

Use & Application1. Personal / Spiritual Level- Svādharma (one’s own dharma): Each person has a unique dharma based on qualities, age, gender (in traditional context), and life stage (e.g., student — Brahmacharya, householder — Grihastha, etc.). Fulfilling svādharma is seen as righteous living.

- Moral virtues: Truthfulness (satya), non-violence (ahimsa), compassion (daya), generosity (dāna), self-control (self-discipline), etc., form part of dharma.

- Life events & rituals: Performing duties in rites of passage (samskāras like marriage, upanayana) under dharma’s guidance.

2. Societal / Cultural Level- Varṇāśrama dharma: Historically linked to caste duties (Brahmin — teaching/rituals, Kshatriya — protection, Vaishya — trade, Shudra — service) and stages of life. Modern understanding often re-interprets it contextually rather than strictly hierarchical.

- Law & Order (Rāja dharma): Kings/rulers were expected to uphold dharma by ensuring justice and protection. In contemporary terms, it translates to lawful, ethical governance and citizenship — “doing right by society.”

- Festivals & customs: Many Hindu festivals reflect dharmic values — e.g., Diwali symbolizes victory of good (dharma) over evil (adharma).

3. Scriptural sources- Vedas & Smṛtis: Dharma is expounded in texts like the Dharmasūtras, Manusmṛuti, epics Ramayana (Rama as “Maryada Purushottam” upholding dharma), Mahabharata (Bhagavad Gita’s discourse on svādharma).

- Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 2 & 3): Emphasizes performing one’s duty (svādharma) without attachment to results — aligning action with dharma.

Application to Humanity & Culture- Ethical living: Dharma provides a framework for individuals to lead purposeful, morally anchored lives, contributing to personal well-being and societal harmony.

- Social responsibility: It stresses duties toward family, community, environment — e.g., caring for parents (pitr-r debt), protecting nature (eco-dharma).

- Cultural continuity: Rituals, festivals, and value systems rooted in dharma help preserve cultural identity and communal cohesion across generations.

- Modern adaptation: Many reinterpret dharma contextually — focusing on “righteous duty” in professions (e.g., “work as dharma” — performing job with integrity, service orientation).

Key take-aways- Dharma ≠ blind rule-following; it’s context-sensitive duty/righteousness.

- Balances individual freedoms with social responsibilities.

- In Hindu culture, it permeates personal life, society, governance, festivals, and spirituality.

- Contemporary relevance lies in ethical conduct, social justice, and sustainable living — seeing dharma as “right action for the welfare of all”.

SUPERSTITIONS

Superstitions have been around since ancient times. They are found in every society, country, culture, and religion. Hinduism is no exception to it. As Hinduism is one of the oldest cultures on Earth, and the literacy rate in India is low, many superstitions exist.

What I have noticed is that not all superstitions are baseless. Some do have some point in them, or are purposefully spread to keep people away from danger. These superstitions have been given the cover of religion so that ordinary people would Another important point regarding superstitions is the language of nature. God speaks to us through the language of nature. For example, seeing an owl while going to an important work is considered ominous. It could be an indication that you would be in danger. But the problem is that no book would teach you the language of nature, which differs from region to region. A thing considered a bad sign in one region is considered a good sign in another. In the old days, people looked for good or bad signs before leaving home or doing important things.

Critics say that Hindus are the most superstitious, but this is partially true. Even many people in America, which has a 100% literacy rate, are superstitious and do not get out of their homes on Friday the 13th. If you study different cultures, you would find that many are more superstitious

than the Hindu culture. Hence, it is pointless to say that Hindus are the most superstitious.

The Position of Saturn at the Time of Birth: Saturn's position at birth is described in Janma Kundali. Janma Kundali is a very controversial topic. Though its use has not been proved scientifically, many people have very positive experiences. Therefore, lots of people still use Janma Kundali to solve their problems.

B. Cutting Nails and Hair on Saturday: This thing seems meaningless. The hair and nails are living parts of our bodies. Therefore, this thing must have been spread.

C. Eating Non-Vegetarian Food on Saturday: This has been done in particular to control the amount of non-veg food intake. Eating excessive non-veg food is not suitable for our health. Therefore, this superstition is there and helps control non-veg fo

2. Planet Mars: The position of Mars at the time of birth has been given a lot of importance, especially regarding marriage. If a girl or a boy has Mars in a specific position in Janma Kundali, it is considered very bad, and that boy/girl needs to marry the boy/girl who has the same position as Mars in Janma Kundali. It is believed that if they do not do so, their spouse will die shortly.

Because of this, some people do not find their partner and remain unmarried for life. It is an unfortunate thing that just because of the position of a planet, somebody is not able to get married. Thousands of people die immediately after marriage, even if they do not have Mars in Janma Patrika, so why should one worry about this thing?

3. No-moon Phase (Amavasya): Hindus consider the day of the no-moon phase very inauspicious. Some people avoid going to work on this day. People avoid starting new projects or buying new things on this day. They tie a lemon with seven chilies to their vehicles on this day. It is believed that evil forces are more potent on this day. Therefore, people avoid going out at night on this day.

We can see the Moon's influence on the sea in terms of tides. Therefore, the moon may also have some influence on the human body. It is observed that psychic people behave weirdly on this day. The moon certainly has some influence on these people. Even though it is observed that the crime rate increases on this day. So, I do not think this is mere superstition and needs further study.

4. Running on Burning Coals: Some people run on burning coals and claim that they can do so because of some supernatural powers. An

average person can also do this if they know the trick. Getting burned depends on the contact time between the skin and the heat. If you briefly come in contact with heat, you would not get burned.

5. Body Piercing: Some people pierce their bodies with long nails, needles, and metal rods and claim to have divine powers. This is just a superstition; a normal person can do this with practice and tricks.
6. Black Cat Crossing the Way: This superstition is not related to Hinduism in any way but is a common superstition in India. If you are going for a particular work and a black cat crosses your path horizontally, it is believed that the work will not get done then. Some people even abandon that work and decide to do it afterward.

Many cultures believe that cats and dogs possess supernatural powers and can sense danger in advance. But it has nothing to do with work. It is quite possible that they can sense something like an earthquake or the death of a person, but concerning the work, I could not find any scientific basis for it. It is just a superstition.

7. Eclipse: The solar and lunar eclipses are natural phenomena, but Hindus believe this time is inauspicious. People do not leave their houses and prefer not to do any work during a solar eclipse. Pregnant women are advised not to do any work or even sleep during this time. It is believed that donating money, clothes, and/or grains during this time nullifies the effect of an eclipse on our lives.
8. Sneezing: If you go for important work and someone sneezes near you, it is considered an omen.

Sneezing is a natural thing, and it is tough to stop it voluntarily. So, I think it is just a superstition and there is no science in it. Hinduism has nothing to do with it, but it is a common superstition in India.

9. Menstruation: In some Hindu families, if a woman is menstruating, she is not allowed to do regular duties like cooking, worshiping, or even touching things that others would come in contact with. She has to spend four to five days in a corner of the house doing little work, like washing clothes and utensils, or doing outside work. She is also not allowed to enter the temple.
This is not a superstition. The scientific reason behind this lies in Ayurveda. When a woman is menstruating, she bleeds a lot and becomes weaker. A lot of stress comes upon her uterus. In the old days and now also, women used to do a lot of heavy work. If they continue to do heavy work during menstruation, it would cause extra stress on their uteri, resulting in uterine cancer. Hence, they are not allowed to do much work during this time.

The reason behind not allowing women inside the temple is that this period is unhygienic for them. Hindus worship God in the form of an idol.

These idols are believed to possess supernatural powers, and extra care is taken to maintain their sacredness. If a menstruating woman comes in contact with it, its power decreases because of the lack of hygiene, as in ancient times, women used to wear clothes instead of sanitary napkins.

Some would argue against this, but I think this must have been the reason.

10. Cutting the Nails at Night and/or in the Home: Cutting the nails at night and/or in the home is supposed to bring destitution on the person.

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This superstition is not baseless. In ancient times, there was no electricity, and advanced instruments like nail cutters were unavailable. So, if someone cuts their nails at night, there are higher chances of cutting his/her finger. Therefore, it is not good to cut the nails at night.

If you cut the nails inside the house, there are chances that those broken nails might fall into the food and go into the stomach of the people living there. It is also unhygienic to cut the nails inside the house as they are generally dirty. Hence, this superstition should be followed by everybody.

11. Entering the house after getting a haircut without having a bath:

If you enter the house without getting a bath after a haircut, there will be more cockroaches.

There is no connection between hair and cockroaches, so it is a superstition, but if you do not have a bath and enter the house after having a haircut, the tiny hair on your body would fall into the house and may contaminate the water and/or food in your house. So, it is a good superstition.

12. Hiccups:

If someone is having hiccups, it is believed that someone is remembering him/her. It is a general superstition and not related to Hinduism in any way.

Hiccup is a natural process that happens due to a problem in the digestive system. It can be cured with things like sugar, water, or medications in the home. Therefore, I think it is just a superstition.

13. Sweeping the house after the evening:

Sweeping the house in or after the evening is supposed to bring destitution.

The reason behind not sweeping the house in or after the evening is that in the old days, there was no electricity. The light of a lamp was not good enough to see minute things on the floor. If any valuable item fell on the ground, the chances were greater for it to be swept along with the dust. Hence, it is advised not to sweep the house in the evening or at night.

14. The Existence of Ghosts:

I had seen a ghost when I was in my adolescence. Also, many times I have experienced its presence, like the disappearance of objects, switches turning off and on, etc., many times. Hence, I believe that ghosts exist.

Another point is that millions of people in the world say they have seen a ghost. So, they all cannot be wrong. Even if we assume that some cases were false, at least some cases should be accurate.

Nearly all the cultures around the world talk about the existence of ghosts. How can all of them be wrong?

15. Itchy Palm:

Many people in India believe that you would get a good amount of money if your right palm itches. Let me tell you, my right palm has been itching for the last month, but instead of getting money, my income has decreased. On top of that, many other unexpected expenditures have come up. I have experienced this thing in the past also. So, I think it is just a superstition.

Itching of the palm might be caused by bacteria or dead skin on the palm.

follow them and keep themselves out of danger**.**

Heya! 😄 What’s catching your eye re: superstitions — like are you thinking about common ones (e.g., breaking a mirror = 7 years bad luck), how they differ across cultures, or maybe why people still follow ’em even in the “rational” age? What vibe you got?

Popular Hindu superstitions1. Breaking a coconut before starting something new — seen as breaking “ego” or obstacles, it’s considered auspicious.

2. Wearing “turmeric” (haldi) on certain occasions — believed to ward off bad influences and bring purity.

3. Avoiding sweeping at night — thought to sweep away prosperity or “Lakshmi” from the home.

4. **Seeing a “black cat crossing” — in some regions it’s deemed unlucky, though interpretations can vary.

5. Eclipses (Solar & Lunar) — considered inauspicious; often food is not cooked and pregnant women are advised to stay indoors.

How they tie with rituals / festivals- Festivals like Diwali: Lighting lamps is believed to invite “Lakshmi”; avoiding sweeping at night links to not “sweeping away wealth.”

- Grahan (eclipses): Temporary suspension of cooking or eating is tied to “spiritual safety.”

Lemons are generally considered as a counter weapon to a "mantra" which is a spell that can be also used for trickery or evil. Some Hindu people also carry lemons while travelling so that they cannot fall under the spell of a "mantra" of a stranger.[*citation needed*]

According to the *nimbu totka* or *nimbu mirchi totka* superstition, hanging a lemon strung with seven chili peppers wards off evil spirits and Alakshmi, the Hindu goddess of misfortune.[40][41] People hang lemons and chillies - sometimes with a piece of coal - outside their homes and shops, or in their vehicles.[42] According to one explanation, the superstition may be based on the belief that beneficial Vitamin C from the

lemon and the chillies is released into the air, and that their odor can repel insects and other pests.[40]

Stepping on a lemon is also considered to cause harm to a person as the lemon may be enchanted with a "mantra" or a dark spell.[43] Lemons and coconuts are used in Hindu rituals called pooja. Government of India frequently performs Hindu rituals on vehicles,[44] computer and electronic equipment, airplanes, jetplanes and weapons. Breaking a coconut in such pooja is also common. Hindus do Shastra pooja which is goddess worship is performed on weapons

Solar and lunar eclipses

There are several superstitions associated with solar eclipses. Solar eclipses are associated with war, violent events and disasters.[47] Any cooked food is considered to have become impure during the event; they are thrown away or given to beggars.[48] People don't eat or cook food during the event.[49][50] Temples are closed before the event and reopened after the event is over. Many shops also remain closed.[49][51] Pregnant women are advised to stay indoors. It is considered inauspicious to give birth during the event. Solar eclipse are also said to cause miscarriages[47][52] Other people also avoid venturing outside.[50] It is believed that the sun rays become toxic during the event and a bath must be taken after the event.[52] Indian stock exchanges also observe a drop in trades during eclipses.[50] There are some reports of disabled children being buried neck-deep in sand or mud in hopes of curing their disabilities.[51][53] Similar beliefs exist around lunar eclipses, where food is avoided and people refrain from venturing outside.[54] Rationalist organisations have been trying to eradicate these superstitions by organising events during eclipses, where people are encouraged to drink water and eat food.[55]

Vastu

This is a superstition common in Hinduism which defines how a house or a building should be constructed and how the orientation and direction and location of rooms and doors should be arranged. Many construction companies in India construct buildings according to it. Hindus follow vastu and they believe that bad things happen in their life or deterioration of their health or disputes with others are due to vastu doshas or defects and they try hard to remedy those defects by altering living space or with other things which counter the effects of vastu. Vastu is similar to Feng shui in China but with more psychological implications for not following vastu correctly.[

Different takes / perspectives- Cultural vs. scriptural: Some of these lean more on local folk traditions rather than direct scriptural backing.

- Modern view: Plenty of folks see them as cultural symbols or “good-luck rituals” rather than literal superstition, using them more for psychological comfort or family tradition.